Testimony of
Laura S. H. Holgate
Vice President for Russia/New Independent States Programs
Nuclear Threat Initiative

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on

Averting Nuclear Terrorism

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Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the opportunity to contribute to this important hearing to explore what's needed to avert nuclear terrorism. As your invitation to this hearing recites in part, there is no shortage of assertions that nuclear terror is the greatest threat we face today. There is also no shortage of evidence and analysis to back up those assertions, and no shortage of calls to act. What we do have a shortage of is responses commensurate with this catastrophic threat, and I am hopeful that you and your colleagues can take steps to remedy this grave situation.

At NTI, we have observed that the difference between a terrorist and a nuclear terrorist is found in the word "nuclear": no nuclear material, no nuclear terrorism. This obvious logic underpins our fundamental prescription for averting nuclear terrorism: secure, consolidate, and—where possible—eliminate nuclear weapons materials, in all forms, in every location. The good news is that we know how to do this, and that it is affordable and achievable within the next decade. The bad news is that we have yet to act with the sense of urgency this threat requires, whether out of a misplaced sense of priorities, or out of a false perception that this threat is not real.

How might a terrorist become a nuclear terrorist? They could steal or acquire a weapon manufactured by a state with a weapons program. Russia has tens of thousands of weapons, including small, portable and low-tech tactical weapons, none of which are subject to outside accounting. The Beslan tragedy demonstrates the corruption and incompetence that exists in the Russian security services. Pakistan is known to have radical Islamists in the armed services charged with guarding their weapons, and A. Q. Kahn, one of the leaders of their nuclear weapons program, ran the most stunning nuclear

black market commerce we have ever seen. North Korea, who has proven they will sell anything to anyone, may be prepared to sell one or more weapons to terrorists once they make enough for themselves.

Given the technical difficulties associated with detonating a bomb that they did not design, however, terrorists might instead prefer to build their own. They could build a simple gun-type device, based on stolen highly enriched uranium or, less likely, an implosion device using plutonium. The raw materials of a nuclear bomb can be found not only in military facilities associated with national weapons programs, but are freely traded, used, and, in many instances poorly guarded, in dozens of civilian research facilities and college campuses in over 40 nations around the world.

We need not speculate about Osama bin Laden's interest in acquiring a nuclear weapon. He has spoken to the world of his intentions, and even sought a *fatwa*, or religious decree, sanctifying his pursuit of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction. We know that he recruited scientists and engineers who could help him realize his nuclear vision, and we found nuclear weapons designs in the caves in Afghanistan. It would be foolish to believe that he is unique among terrorists in seeking nuclear capabilities.

Preventing terrorists' access to nuclear weapons and materials is the single most effective way to avert nuclear terrorism; it's the only step in the process where we have an advantage. Every other step along the terrorists' path to the bomb is easy for them and hard for us. The US and others have been making progress in the prevention mission, in large part through the visionary and effective threat reduction programs known collectively as "Nunn-Lugar," but not on a pace or at a scope that will solve the problem on a timeframe relevant to the threat.

A successful response to the nuclear terror threat must contain a diverse yet coordinated set of policy and programmatic responses; political and financial resources; and a global coalition dedicated to preventing catastrophic terror. I provide some actionable suggestions for each of these three elements. In many cases, these solutions cannot be legislated, but they offer a basis for constructive Congressional oversight. Even though threat reduction programs are subject to Congressional scrutiny far out of proportion to their tiny budgets, such hearings tend to focus on bean-counting and micromanagement. What's missing is Congressional attention to the big picture, and policy-level oversight that holds the Executive Branch accountable to matching words with deeds, and to taking the nuclear threat as seriously as they claim.

<u>Policy and Programmatic Responses</u>

Recent discussions of nuclear proliferation have proposed a number of changes or adjustments in US and global policies on nuclear issues. Some of them would be particularly helpful in averting nuclear terrorism:

- Establish a global norm delegitimizing commercial use of highly enriched uranium

- Aggressively promote and enforce UN Security Council Resolution 1540, which defines a binding series of actions by states to secure weapons materials, to prevent export of weapons technologies, and to track terrorists
- Create mechanisms to develop and promote global best practices in nuclear materials security
- Find new ways to involve India, Israel, and Pakistan in observing the sovereign responsibilities of states with nuclear weapons

Several programmatic improvements, which could be made today, would come closer to responding adequately to the threat of nuclear terrorism:

- Accelerate security upgrades at Russian materials and weapons storage sites. This is doable within 4 years, but at the current pace, it will take well over a decade.
- Accelerate and diversify the Global Threat Reduction Initiative to remove and/or eliminate vulnerable nuclear materials worldwide
- Accelerate elimination of excess Russian highly enriched uranium
- Broaden scope and diversify techniques to reduce overemployment at Russian weapons labs and factories to reduce potential inside collaborators (including through expanded use of US AID)
- Incorporate security culture into training and programmatic success metrics

<u>Resources—Financial and Political</u>

Shockingly, the government-wide funding resources allocated to threat reduction activities overseas have remained constant since the late 1990s at about $1 billion each year, mostly in the budgets of Energy, Defense and State Departments, despite calls both before and after September 11 for significant increases. During this time, the missions have broadened beyond the former Soviet Union to include Libya and Iraq, plus a range of activities to address dangerous nuclear materials around the world.

It has become fashionable, even for these missions' strongest supporters, to point to the backlog of unspent funds in some of these programs and suggest that funding isn't the main problem. In fact, in several of the most critical programs, internal and external bureaucratic disputes over access, liability, certifications and other petty issues have constrained progress more than inadequate funding.

This is why any consideration of resources must make reference to political resources—does removing bureaucratic roadblocks or insisting on greater commitment to threat reduction programs make it into the most senior dialogues with friends and allies abroad? Are cabinet agencies held accountable to effectively perform their nonproliferation responsibilities? Will Members of Congress take the time to understand the complex legislative structure of these programs and cast informed votes in support of more streamlined and flexible programs? Sadly, the answer to these questions has been, not often enough.

Returning, however, to money, assertions that funding shortfalls are not the main problem are less true now than they were two years ago—DOE's program to secure

Russian nuclear materials worked off a three-year backlog last year—and in any case, are over-broad. Project managers for certain efforts to commercialize Russian technology and create civilian jobs for Russian weapons personnel have told me they could effectively spend twice their budget, for example. Important new initiatives, if adopted—such as accelerating destruction of Russia's excess highly enriched uranium—will require new funds.

We must avoid making internal funding trade-offs among these critical programs without considering wider aspects of the federal budget: achieving the pace and scope of action required by the threats will cost more money, but compared with other national security expenditures, these proven prevention approaches are efficient and effective.

A Global Coalition

One way to manage the financial implications of accelerated and broadened threat reduction efforts is to engage other nations, as has been done by creating the G-8 Global Partnership against Weapons of Mass Destruction. G-8 nations and others pledged to match the US's annual $1 billion on threat reduction expenditures, initially in Russia. Unfortunately, these pledges have been slow to become projects that yield results, and we hope for faster progress on that front.

Financial burden-sharing, however, is not the main reason a truly global coalition is necessary to succeed in averting nuclear terrorism. The threats are so broad, the solutions are so diverse, and the ability of the US acting alone to impact sensitive decision-making in every country around the world is so limited, that we must work closely with others to ensure that every nation with nuclear materials secures them to high and transparent standards, that they request assistance if they cannot, and that those who can provide assistance do so. The chain of security to avert nuclear terrorism is only as strong as its weakest link. Strengthened institutions such as the International Atomic Energy Agency must also play a critical role in this mission. Russia in particular must recognize its vulnerability to nuclear terrorism, and understand that the benefits of cooperation outweigh the fears of those who stymie that cooperation today.

Threat reduction principles will be effective only if they are seen to apply to all nations equally, and they depend for their success on a shared understanding that every nation is at risk of nuclear terrorism, whether a bomb explodes on their territory or not. Nuclear terrorists respect no national boundaries, either in their efforts to secure the ingredients for a bomb, or in the impact of a threat or detonation. Beyond the horrifying destruction of a nuclear attack, financial markets will crash, societies will lose faith in their governing structures, civil liberties will be severely truncated, and the free flow of goods, services and ideas in a globalized world will collapse in ways that harm everyone.

The Day After

At NTI, we frequently ask ourselves, our elected representatives, and our fellow citizens of the world: the day after a catastrophic instance of nuclear terror, what will we wish we

had done to prevent it? Why aren't we doing that now? I've done my best to offer some answers to the first question. The second question has no good answers. The time to act is now.